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ABSTRACT

Some studies report that almost half of American workers wish they held different jobs. This paper analyzes the relationships between both the quality and frequency of optimal experience and counselor development. A questionnaire consisting of a 12-item measure of optimal experience, the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire--Revised, and a 1-item measure of flow frequency was administered to 24 counseling practica graduate students. Results supported both research hypotheses: (1) the 12-item measure indicated a positive correlation between the experience of flow and the reported level of counselor development; and (2) the frequency of reported flow experiences while counseling was positively correlated with the level of counselor development. The findings were consistent with both the concept of flow or optimal experience as developed by Csikszentmihalyi and the Integrated Developmental Model of counselor development. The experience of flow and counselor development are complex concepts which appear to be highly correlated. Although with correlation one cannot assign causality, one may speculate that the complex nature of counseling probably provides numerous challenges which make the experience of flow possible. Included here are two scatterplots, which graph the reported optimal experiences, and a copy of the counselor questionnaire. (RJM)

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ED 375 337

Correlation of Optimal Experience and Counselor Development

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Running head: OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE AND COUNSELOR DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The relationships between the quality and frequency of optimal experience and counselor development were investigated. A questionnaire consisting of a 12-item measure of optimal experience (Delle Fave & Massimini, 1988; Mayers, 1978), the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire -- Revised (McNeill, Stoltenberg, & Romans, 1991), and a one-item measure of flow frequency was administered to 24 counseling practica graduate students at the University of Southern Mississippi. The results revealed significant positive relationships: (a) between the quality of counselors' optimal experience and counselor development, $r(22) = .73$, $p < .001$ and (b) between the frequency of counselors' optimal experiences when counseling and counselor development, $r(22) = .51$, $p < .01$. The findings are consistent with both the concept of flow or optimal experience as developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1982, 1987, 1990) and the Integrated Developmental Model (McNeill, Stoltenberg, & Romans, 1991; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987) of counselor development.

Correlation of Optimal Experience And Counselor Development

A conservative estimate of the proportion of American workers who wish they were in different jobs encompasses almost half the work force (Wegmann, Chapman, & Johnson, 1989, p. 121). Perhaps, some of the dissatisfaction is related to a change in the work ethic. Harman and Hormann (1990) suggest that, in a technologically advanced society, "employment exists primarily for self-development, and is only secondarily concerned with the production of goods and services" (p. 26). A dominant attitude, adopted, at least in part, by about 40% of the work force is that "work should be personally satisfying rather than valuable for its own sake" (Naisbitt & Aberdene, 1985, p. 93).

Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1982, 1987, 1990) has studied those experiences reported to be enjoyable and autotelic (worth seeking for its own sake). He called these phenomenological states "optimal experiences" and the state of consciousness required to experience them "flow." Csikszentmihalyi suggested that the phenomenology of the enjoyment of any experience, work or leisure, is characterized by the same elements. These elements include, first, a chance of completing the task attempted. Second, the focus of consciousness is narrowed (i.e., concentration on what one is doing). Concentration is usually possible because of the next two elements. Third, the task attempted has clear goals. One knows what to do in order to succeed in accomplishing the task. Fourth, the task undertaken often provides immediate feedback.

One receives almost constant information about whether one is reaching the desired goal. Fifth, concentration on the task at hand is so intense that irrelevant stimuli to the task are excluded from awareness. One is not preoccupied with extraneous thoughts about the past or the future. Boredom is eliminated. Sixth, optimal experience allows one to feel a sense of control over one's actions. More precisely, one lacks anxiety about losing control. Seventh, a loss of self-consciousness is experienced. Preoccupation with oneself disappears. Eighth, one's sense of duration of time changes. Most often, time is reported to pass faster than usually experienced.

Many of the basic studies and much of the theoretical formulation concerning a psychology of optimal experience was done by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1982, 1990) alone or with a co-author. His most relevant study to this research investigated whether the quality of experience was more influenced by whether a person was at work or at leisure or more influenced by whether a person was in flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1989). The results indicated that all the variables measuring the quality of experience, except for relaxation and motivation, were more affected by flow.

Results from a study by Morse (1975) suggested the importance of a proper match between person and job. He found a higher feeling of competence among workers well matched with degree of complexity and ambiguity on the job compared to those poorly matched. Csikszentmihalyi (1982) found that optimal experiences are reported

when challenges and skills are equal. Flow experiences are bounded outside their narrow characteristics by anxiety when challenges are substantially greater than one's skill level and boredom when challenges are substantially lower. Challenges in this case are perceived challenges.

Flow or optimal experience is "the subjective reality that justifies the actions and events of any life history" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982, p. 13). This study is based upon a phenomenological understanding of the importance of the quality of human experience to vocational counseling. A primary assumption of this study is that the control of consciousness determines the quality of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 20). The theoretical model, in contrast to pure phenomenology, adopts principles from information theory, yielding a brief definition of consciousness as "intentionally ordered information." A main force that affects consciousness adversely is psychic disorder. Psychic disorder or psychic entropy is information that conflicts with existing intentions or distracts us from carrying them out. Depending on the conditions, we may experience it as pain, fear, anxiety, or in other ways. Whatever the experience, all these varieties of psychic disorder force attention toward undesirable objects and away from our own preferences.

Without exposition, Csikszentmihalyi suggested that the work of Bandura (1977, 1978) and Bandura and Schunk (1981) using the concept of "self-efficacy" may provide a model for the unified understanding of

negative and positive experiences. In this theory, Bandura (1977) states that psychological treatments of any form change the level and strength of a person's self-efficacy. Expectations of personal efficacy are said to determine all dimensions of any coping behavior initiated including how long it will be sustained when faced with opposition. These expectations are derived from four primary sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. Although one may guess that decreasing expectations of efficacy may increase psychic disorder, perhaps the most apparent relationship to existing studies of flow is how flow is often operationally defined.

Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 260) credit Professor Massimini and his team at the University of Milan with a conceptual and methodological breakthrough in operationalizing the concept of flow. These researchers proposed that the flow experience begins when challenges and skills required for a task are in balance but above a person's mean for challenges and skills. This model can predict four basic subjective results in any single activity: (a) below average use of skills plus below average challenges yield apathy, (b) above average use of skills and below average challenges result in boredom, (c) below average skills coupled with challenges above a person's average level results in anxiety, and (d) when a person is required to use skills somewhat above their average level to meet above average challenges the result is often the experience of flow. Notably,

flow seems dependent on perceived skills and challenges rather than actual skills and challenges. It is in this respect that the concepts of flow and self-efficacy appear related. Unless people perceive that they get better at the task attempted, they can no longer enjoy it. Flow thus leads individuals toward increasing complexification (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 263).

The theory of optimal experience can be related to Super's model of career development which states in part that:

> Work satisfactions and life satisfactions depend upon the extent to which the individual finds adequate outlets for abilities, interests, personality traits, and values; they depend upon the establishment in a type of work, a work situation, and a way of life in which he or she can play the kind of role that growth and exploratory experiences have led him or her to consider congenial and appropriate. (Minor, 1985, p. 20).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 41) suggested that the self may be said to grow by becoming increasingly complex. "Complexity is the result of two broad psychological processes: differentiation and integration" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 41). Through differentiation the self moves toward uniqueness. Through integration the self unites with people, ideas, and entities beyond the self. By experiencing flow, the self becomes more complex. As Super stated, "Work and occupation provide a focus for personality organization for most men and many women, although for some persons this focus is peripheral, incidental, or even

nonexistent, and other foci such as leisure activities and homemaking are central" (Minor, 1985, p. 20).

Stoltenberg (1981) proposed a developmental model of counselor supervision called the Counselor Complexity Model. The model suggests that a trainee progresses through a sequence of identifiable stages in the training process. Trainees are viewed as individuals who take part in a course of development through which their identities as counselors emerge. A premise of the model is that "there are qualitative . differences in addition to, and not accounted for by, mere quantitative differences in skill level and the knowledge of theories" (Stoltenberg, 1981, p. 59). Stoltenberg proposed four counselor levels with an optimal environment for training in each level. He suggested that a person needs a changing environment during development to promote movement toward the greater complexity of each successive stage. The four counselor levels from least to most complex are: (a) Level 1 in which the trainee is largely dependent on the supervisor, (b) Level 2 during which a dependency-autonomy conflict is the trainee's primary characteristic, (c) Level 3 in which the trainee shows conditional dependency and develops an increased sense of personal counselor identity and professional self-confidence, and (d) Level 4 which marks the development of the master counselor capable of independent practice.

Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) revised and expanded the Counselor Complexity Model to propose the Integrated Developmental

Model (IDM). The IDM proposes that trainees progress through changes in three structures in four developmental levels. The structures are (a) Self and Other-Awareness, (b) Motivation, and (c) Dependency-Autonomy. In the first developmental level, trainees are dependent on their supervisor, highly focused on their own anxieties, high in motivation, and low in their understanding of the counseling process. While in Level 2, trainees undergo a dependency-autonomy conflict based upon their need for supervision. Motivation fluctuates as trainees question their skills. The trainee now focuses primarily on the client's experiences rather than on the self. In Level 3, the trainee functions more autonomously. Again, motivation is high, based on a more complete understanding of the counseling process. Trainees are able to integrate their emotional and cognitive responses with an awareness of the client's needs. The three structures are applied to different domains of counselor training. Development is proposed to occur progressively at varying rates across these domains of training. For example, one client may progress more quickly in intervention competence than in client conceptualization along one or all three domains. The last level is Level 3 Integrated. In this stage, Level 3 structures are present in many domains and the counselor works toward integration across domains.

Delle Fave and Massimini (1988) performed extensive interviews with four European groups who lived in close geographical proximity in northern Italy but exhibited very different ecologies and cultural environments. The instrument used was similar to a portion of the

instrument used in this study. Traditional Occitans integrated optimal experience into their everyday pastoral lives. Work was experienced as autotelic. Flow was more rarely experienced in leisure activities and leisure activities themselves occurred less often (about once per week) than in younger respondents who wanted to abandon the traditional mode of life. These younger respondents primarily experienced flow in leisure contexts like skiing rather than at work. In a large extended family of 46 people in the Gressoney Valley three generations were interviewed. The oldest generation rated their work at the highest level on five dimensions: involvement, effortless concentration, few distractions, infrequent anxiety, and lack of boredom. The second generation's ratings on the same scales were significantly less positive. The youngest generation rated their work as significantly less positive than the second generation on the same five dimensions. All three groups recognized the characteristics of flow but differed in the activities in which they experienced it. Delle Fave and Massimini (1988) also studied five groups of dancers divided by level of training. The groups were first through fourth year students and a group of teachers. All of the respondents recognized dance as a flow activity, but in different proportions depending on their level of training. Only 50% of the first year group recognized dance as a flow activity but that proportion increased with each year of study, reaching 100% among fourth year students and teachers. These dancers appeared to share with the traditional Occitans and the old farmers of the Gressoney

Valley a lifestyle in which optimal experiences permeate their everyday lives.

Many people in the United States are unhappy with their jobs. Perhaps these people have not found jobs that allow personal growth or are unable to change existing jobs to provide outlets for growth. Many now feel that work should be "fun" or personally satisfying. Vocational counselors need basic information about the relationship between job satisfaction and the subjective experiences of enjoyment. If we can identify what elements are correlated with optimal experience across widely diverse job experiences, we can: (a) explore ways in which workers can optimize the chances of job enjoyment and/or (b) explore ways of creating flow experiences for workers.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among counselor development, identification of counseling as a flow experience, and ratings of the optimal experience occurring while counseling. The proposed relationship between flow experiences and perceived development has implications beyond further enhancement of counseling for the person/job match. Research indicated that adults who claimed to have more frequent flow experiences also spent more time on the job actually working (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982). Increased frequency of work-related flow experiences may thus imply increased productivity.

As discussed above, both the Counselor Complexity Model and the Integrated Developmental Model propose that counselor trainees move

through progressively more complex stages as they develop as counselors. Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 41) suggested that the self becomes more complex by experiencing flow. Delle Fave and Massimini's (1988) study found that more dancers at a higher level of training than at a lower level of training recognize dance as a flow activity. These relationships led the researcher to test the hypotheses that there are positive relationships: (a) between the experience of flow as indicated by scores on a 12-item measure and reported level of counselor development and (b) between the frequency of reported flow experiences and the reported level of counselor development.

Method

Subjects

All subjects were students in the graduate program in Counseling Psychology and Counselor Education at the University of Southern Mississippi enrolled in Counseling Practicum 1 (Prac 1), Counseling Practicum 2 (Prac. 2), or in a Special Problems practicum (Prac. 3) limited to upper level (3rd or 4th year) doctoral students. Prac. 1 and Prac. 2 each had two sections with different instructors. In Prac. 1 each section was divided into teams of three or four students. Each team had its own doctoral student as a supervisor. In one section of Prac. 2 and in Prac. 3 there were no doctoral supervisors. None of the doctoral students in Prac. 3 served as supervisors in other practica.

Seventeen Prac. 1 students, seven Prac. 2 students, and six Prac. 3 students were asked to participate., the total enrollment in each class.

Twenty-eight students returned questionnaires. Of that number, 24 students had completed all scored items and were used in the study. Data from 15 Prac. 1 students, 5 Prac. 2 students, and 4 Prac. 3 students was included in the analysis. Seventeen subjects were masters students, six were doctoral students, and one was unidentified. Subjects were 17 females and 7 males with an age range of 22 years to 51 years with one subject's age left unidentified. Of the 23 identified ages, the mean age of subjects was 32.6 years and the median age 32 years. Twenty subjects identified themselves as white, two identified themselves as black, and two left race unidentified. Eight students reported counseling experience aside from practica. Length of reported counseling experience for these students was 3 months, 8 months, one year each for three students, three years each for two students, and six years.

Materials

Other than a short demographic section which did not include student names, the self-report instrument was composed of three parts: Part A, Part B, and Part C (See Appendix A). The response format for each item in each part was a 7-point Likert scale with NEVER and ALWAYS as polar anchors. Subjects were assured of the confidentiality of all individual data.

Part A consisted of 12 items used to rate the subject's optimal experience when counseling. The items were very similar to those used by Delle Fave and Massimini (1988). The items originated in an unpublished doctoral dissertation by Mayers (1978). Delle Fave and

Massimini (1988) asked interviewees to rate reported flow activities along 12 dimensions using an 8-point semantic differential scale. The dimensions correspond to elements of the theory of optimal experience described in the introduction.

Part B consisted of the 30-item Supervisee Levels Questionnaire -- Revised (SLQ-R). The Supervisee Levels Questionnaire was a 24-item self-report instrument used by McNeill, Stoltenberg, and Pierce (1985) to test the Counselor Complexity Model. The instrument was designed to test a developmental continuum associated with the levels of the model. Results suggested that trainees progress through a continuous developmental sequence. McNeill, Stoltenberg, and Romans (1991) assessed constructs relevant to Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) Integrated Developmental Model (IDM) using the SLQ-R. The SLQ-R is divided on the basis of sub-scale correlations into items measuring trainee development in three structures. Twelve items comprise the Self and Other-Awareness sub-scale (range=12-84). Eight items comprise the Motivation sub-scale (range=8-56). Ten items make up the Dependency-Autonomy sub-scale (range=10-70). All 30 SLQ-R items have a range of 30 to 210. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients for the three sub-scales are .83 for Self and Other-Awareness, .74 for Motivation, and .64 for Dependency-Autonomy. The Chronbach Alpha reliability coefficient for the total score is .88. McNeill, Stoltenberg, and Romans assessed construct validity by examining differences in sub-scale and total scores among groups defined as beginning, intermediate,

and advanced trainees based on counseling experience (range=1-26 semesters), supervision experience (range=1-8 semesters), and graduate education (range=1-8 years). The authors classified trainees developmentally by assigning each trainee a value for each index of experience and summing those values to form a Trainee Experience variable. This procedure resulted in the following division: 22 beginning trainees with one semester of supervision and counseling experience and one to two years of graduate education (Trainee Experience ≤ 4), 48 intermediate trainees with two to four semesters of counseling and supervision and 3 years of graduate education (Trainee Experience 5-7), and 35 advanced trainees with five or more semesters of supervision and counseling and four or more years of graduate education (Trainee Experience > 7). Planned contrasts revealed no significant differences between the beginning and intermediate trainees and confidence intervals suggested sizable overlap in the SLQ-R scores of the two groups. Scores of both beginners and intermediates were consistently lower than the advanced group with little overlap suggested by confidence intervals. The authors interpreted these results as suggesting that the subjects in the study may have actually been at the beginning and intermediate levels as defined in the IDM. The lack of ceiling effect thus implies a higher possible range for more experienced counselors. The study concluded that counseling trainees show characteristics consistent with the constructs of the IDM as measured by the SLQ-R.

Part C of the questionnaire contained one item with three quotations describing optimal experiences. The quotations originated from subjects describing their own experiences and were used by Csikszentmihalyi (1982) in a study. Results from the study of 82 adult workers revealed that 87% knew the feeling described in the statements. Frequency of the experience was: 30% experienced it less than once a week, 40% felt something like it every week, and 30% reported that they experienced it daily. Eleven of the respondents could not identify with the experience at all. Usually, persons who identified with one statement also responded to the other two. The average correlation between the reported frequency of the three experiences was .58. Of 71 persons identifying with the statements, 31% said that it occurred most frequently when they were working, 22% during hobbies and home activities, 18% during sports and outdoor activities, 16% during social activities, and 13% during passive attending activities. The study used pager-induced (beepers) self-reports at random intervals over a week. Delle Fave and Massimini (1988) also used the three passages to help interviewees identify a flow activity. In the present study, counselor trainees were asked to read the three passages carefully and then mark the frequency of the experience occurring while they were counseling.

Procedure

Instructors of each practica section were contacted by the researcher and asked if class or staffing time could be used to ask for

participants and, if possible, to allow those consenting trainees to complete the questionnaire. Two instructors (one in Prac. 2 and the Prac. 3 instructor) elected to distribute the questionnaires to their own sections and allow the students to return the completed forms to a designated place. In three sections of trainees the researcher asked for participants and told the trainees that all questions on the questionnaire pertained to their current behavior and feelings when counseling. The researcher answered any questions required for clarification after distribution of the questionnaire. The questionnaire required about 10 to 15 minutes to complete after which the forms were collected. Students were allowed as much time as needed for completion. Data was collected during the eighth and ninth weeks of a 10-week summer term. Subjects had spent approximately 7 to 8 weeks in their respective counseling practica.

Data was collected and analyzed from the completed forms by the researcher. In Part A, optimal experience was rated along 12 dimensions. The following items in Part A were reversed for scoring: 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11. Higher scores indicated increasing quality of flow experiences. All 12 items were summed to obtain a total optimal experience score for each subject on Part A. Part B, the SLQ-R, yielded a total counselor development score. On Part B, the following items were scored in reverse: 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, and 20. Higher scores on Part B indicated a higher level of counselor development. Results of Part C consisted of a single item score. Higher scores in Part C

indicated a higher level of counselor identification of optimal experience with the counseling process. Part C, as a one-item measure, was considered a less reliable indication of flow than Part A with 12 items.

Results

Results supported both research hypotheses. (a) The experience of flow as indicated by a 12-item measure (Part A) was positively correlated with the reported level of counselor development (Part B). (b) The frequency of reported flow experiences while counseling (Part C) was positively correlated with the level of counselor development (Part B).

Figures 1 and 2 show scatterplots of the relationships tested in (a) and (b) respectively. Descriptive statistics for each part of the questionnaire are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Parts A, B, and C of the Questionnaire

Part	Mean	Median	Range
A	61.88	62.5	51-75
B	152.13	153.5	113-188
C	4.63	5.79	2-6

A Pearson product-moment correlation revealed a substantial relation between each participant's total score on Part A, measuring optimal experience, and their total score on Part B, measuring counselor development, $r(22) = .73$, $p < .001$. A second Pearson product-moment correlation also revealed a significant relationship between each trainee's total score on Part B and their score on Part C, frequency of counseling flow experiences as measured by identification with any of three descriptive passages, $r(22) = .51$, $p < .01$.

To assess the predictive validity of the SLQ-R (Part B) for optimal experience, subjects were divided into two groups of equal number according to their score on the SLQ-R. The 12 highest scoring subjects were placed in one group (Group 1) and the 12 lowest scoring subjects in another (Group 2). A comparison of the two groups using the optimal experience scores from Part B revealed a significant difference between Group 1 ($M = 65.67$, $SD = 4.64$) and Group 2 ($M = 58.08$, $SD = 6.10$), $t(22) = 3.43$, $p < .005$, one-tailed test.

The predictive validity of the 12-item optimal experience score from Part A for counselor development was likewise assessed. The 12 highest scoring subjects on Part A were placed in Group 3 and the 12 lowest scoring subjects on Part A in Group 4. Comparison of the two groups using the counselor development scores from Part B revealed a significant difference between Group 3 ($M = 162.25$. $SD = 18.09$) and Group 4 ($M = 142$. $SD = 16.97$)., $t(22) = 2.83$, $p < .005$, one-tailed test.

To obtain information about the distribution of students who reported some experience other than practica as counselors, scores for both Part A, optimal experience, and Part B, counselor development, were each divided into three equal groups of eight subjects each. Groups for both parts thus consisted of the highest third of the scores, the middle third of the scores, and the lowest third. For both Part A, optimal experience, and Part B, counselor development, six of the eight subjects reporting counselor experience were found in the highest third of the scores and two of the subjects were found in the middle third of the scores. No subjects reporting counselor experience were found in the lowest third of the scores for Part A or Part B.

Discussion

Results support the research hypotheses that positive relationships exist: (a) between the quality of optimal experience and counselor development and (b) between frequency of optimal experience and counselor development. The experience of flow and counselor development are complex concepts which appear to be highly correlated. Both concepts are united by a proposed growth in complexity. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) concluded that every flow activity studied "pushed the person to higher levels of performance, and led to previously undreamed-of states of consciousness" (p. 74). Although with correlation one cannot assign causality, one may speculate that the complex nature of counseling probably provides numerous challenges which make the experience of flow possible. The highest possible score on the SLQ-R is

210. The highest score in this study on the SLQ-R was 188, higher than the top of the range (172) of the previous study (McNeill, Stoltenberg, & Romans, 1991), but still far from the ceiling as was the group mean of 152.13. That study and the present one suggest that the SLQ-R can measure higher levels of counselor development than was demonstrated by the present subjects. Results of Part A, the quality of optimal experience, also suggest the further possibility of growth with a high score of 75 out of a possible 84 and a mean of 61.88.

That most of the subjects with counseling experience were found in the top third of the scores for optimal experience and for the SLQ-R suggests support for both the flow model and for the Integrated Developmental Model. One would expect that subjects with more experience would be able to experience a higher quality of flow in a complex task such as counseling. More inexperienced counselors could be predicted to be more anxious, more self-conscious, less likely to feel that they can handle the demands of the situation, etc. Likewise, the IDM was developed to measure counselor qualities that vary with counseling experience.

Although Part A was designed to reflect the elements of optimal experience, interpretation of data is limited by a lack of information on the reliability and validity of this instrument. Use of data from the one item measure of flow descriptions in Part C is also limited by its nature as a single item. Part C is somewhat remarkable by its significant correlation with the SLQ-R. Participants were able to recognize the

descriptions of flow as similar to their experiences in counseling. Results of Part C lend support to the researcher's assumption that Part A was actually measuring the quality of optimal experience. The correlation of Parts C and B suggests that, not only does the perceived quality of optimal experience improve as indicated by the correlation of Parts A and B, but the frequency of optimal experience increases with counselor development. This finding supports Delle Fave and Massimini (1988) in their study of dance students and teachers. Those researchers found that 50% of first year dance students recognized dance as a flow activity. That proportion increased with each year of study, reaching 100% among fourth year students and teachers. In the present study, although two students marked on Part C that they "rarely" experienced flow while counseling, no trainee marked "never." That finding may result from procedural differences or from the study of two very different kinds of activities.

To provide a measure of predictive validity both Groups A and B were divided into high and low scoring subjects with the subjects' scores on the alternate measure then being tested for significant differences between high and low groups. Scores on the SLQ-R produced significantly different high and low flow groups and scores on the 12-item Part A flow measure produced significantly different high and low counselor development groups. McNeill, Stoltenberg, and Romans (1991) tested three groups of counselor trainees judged by several criteria to be at Beginning, Intermediate, or Advanced levels. Group means were

133.7, 136.3, and 147.4 respectively. Those researchers, finding no significant differences between the Beginning and Intermediate groups, concluded that their groups might better be renamed simply Beginner and Intermediate by combining the present groups with those names and calling their Advanced group Intermediate-level counselors. Groups in the present study divided by scores on the Part A flow measure produced groups with SLQ-R means of 142 and 162.25, somewhat higher than means in the previous study. That study included 105 subjects in various training programs. Regression toward the mean in the original study with more subjects or training variability and selection procedures may account for the difference in means. Of importance is that a measure of flow could discriminate between developmental levels of counselors. Further research is suggested to test flow measures as discriminators of development in other activities and areas of work.

Because of limited information available on the sub-scales of the SLQ-R, the researcher could not attempt to do a finer analysis of the relationships tested. For example, previous studies of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1989) suggest that motivation is affected by other factors (such as whether a person is at work or in a leisure activity) more than whether a person is experiencing flow. The Integrated Developmental Model proposes that motivation is high in counselor Level 1, is reduced in Level 2, and is high again in Level 3 (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). Deleting those questions on the SLQ-R that measure

motivation may increase the strength of its relationship with flow measures.

In conclusion, the concept of flow appears to have a strong positive relationship with counselor development as defined in the Integrated Developmental Model. As one who plans to work within a profession that seems to be questioning where the concept of development should be placed within its own identity (Heck, 1990; Robinson, 1990; Van Hesteren & Ivey, 1990), the researcher finds that the concept of flow offers the possibility of forming conceptual associations among quite diverse activities. Flow provides a framework with which to understand the quality of human experience. What the concept will contribute to counseling, vocational or otherwise, remains to be seen. The results of this study suggest that further research is needed.

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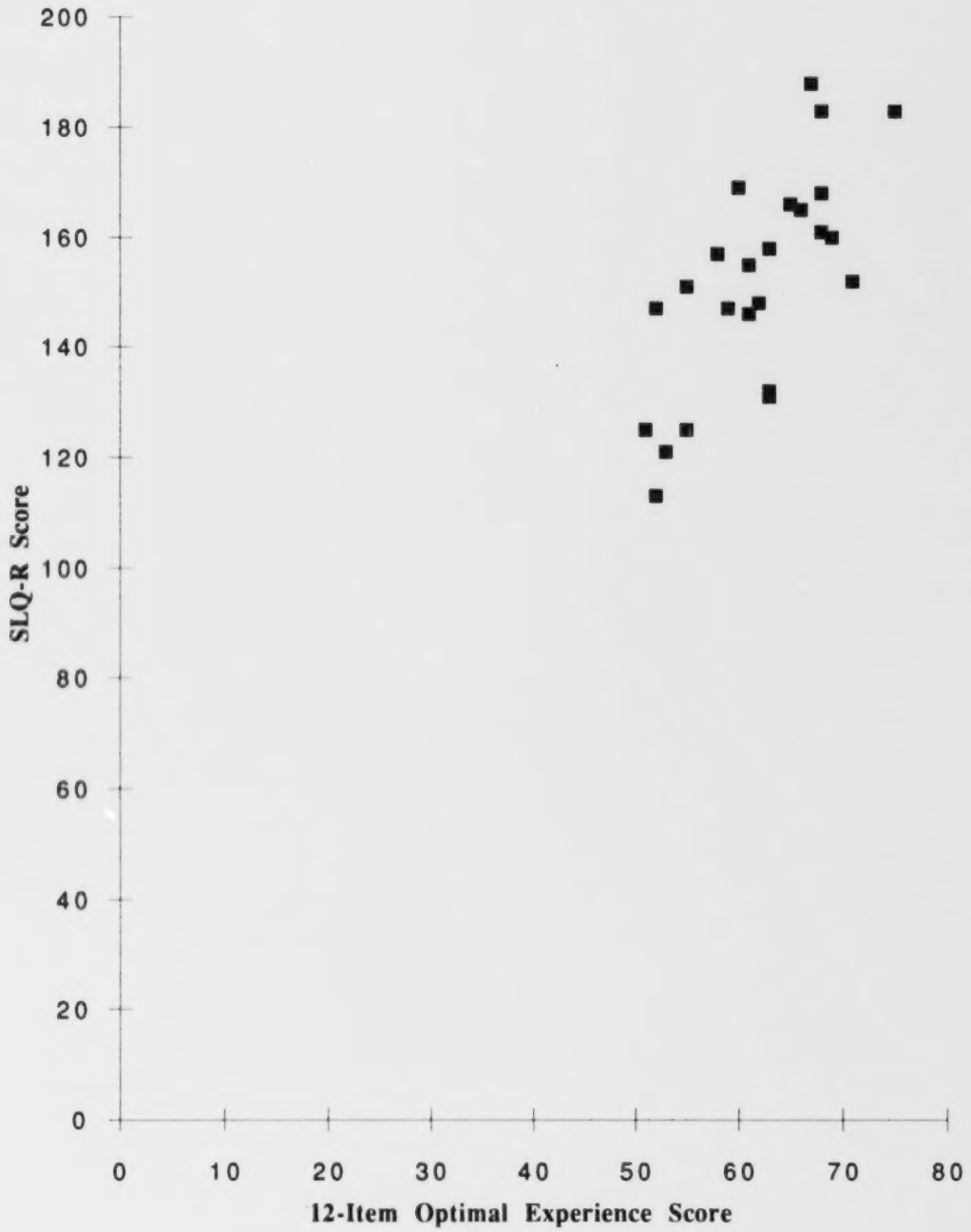
FIGURE 1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160
140
120
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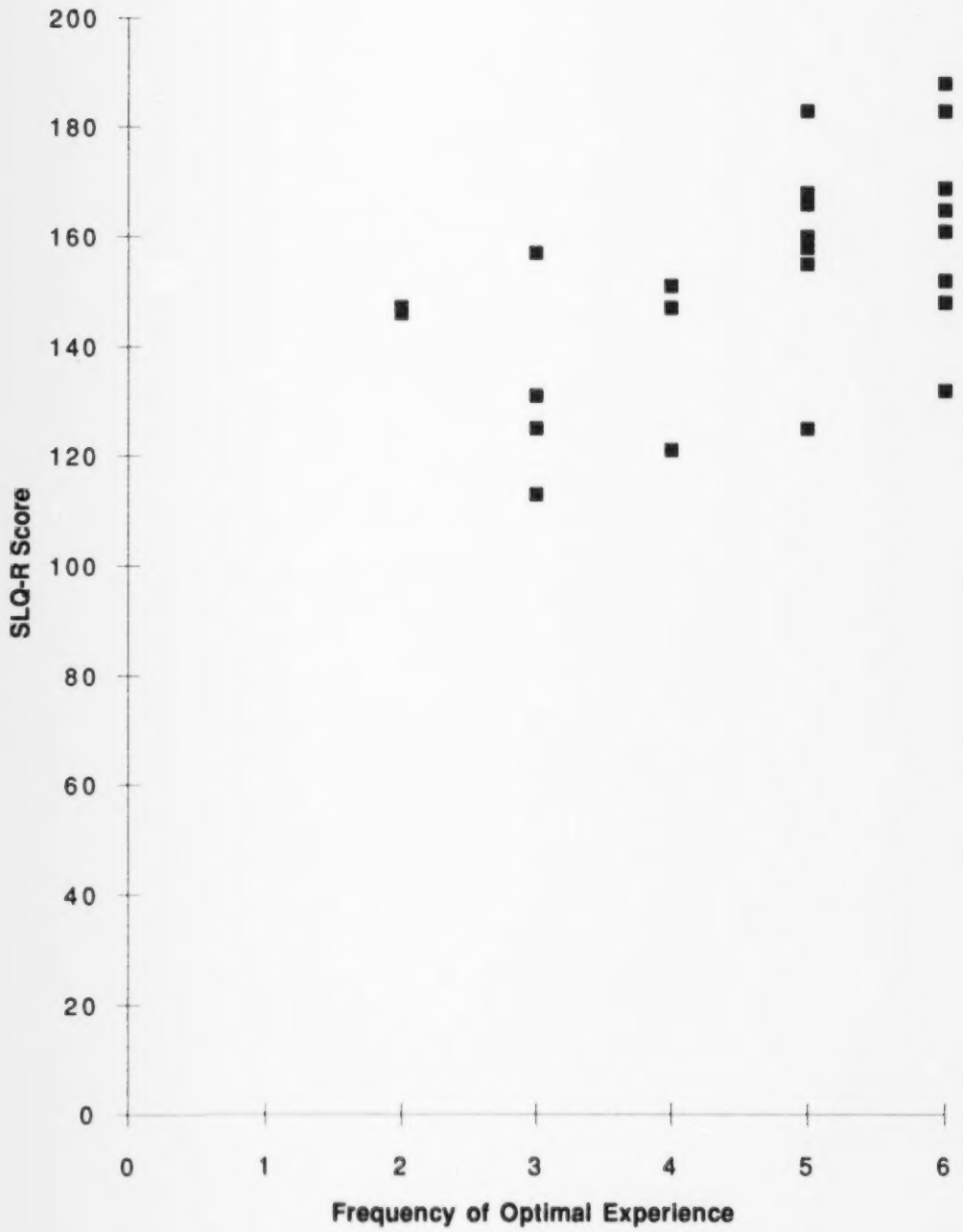
SLQ-R Score
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
12-Item Optimal Experience Score

FIGURE 2


200
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SLQ-R Score
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
Frequency of Optimal Experience

Appendix A

COUNSELOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for consenting to complete this brief questionnaire. All individual data will remain confidential. You may discontinue the questionnaire at any time prior to its completion. Aside from basic demographic information, the questionnaire consists of three parts -- Part A, Part B, and Part C. In each part you will be asked to respond to questions about your experience as a counselor. The questions in this survey all pertain to how you currently behave and feel when counseling your clients. With your help, the researcher hopes to learn more about the subjective experience of working as a counselor.

Demographic Information

Please, complete the following section of basic information but do not write your name.

Age:_____ Sex: _____ Race:_____

I am presently enrolled:

In Counseling Practicum 1:_____ In Counseling Practicum 2: _____

In Special Problems:_____

As a masters student:_____ As a doctoral student: _____

Apart from practicum experience, I have _____years, _____months experience as a counsel

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Instructions For Completing Questionnaire

In terms of your own current behavior and feelings as a counselor, please answer the items in this questionnaire according to the following scale.

1: NEVER
2: RARELY
3: SOMETIMES
4: HALF THE TIME
5: OFTEN
6: MOST OF THE TIME
7: ALWAYS

Part A

1. I get involved.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. I get anxious.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. I clearly know what I am supposed to do.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. I get direct clues as to how well I am doing.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. I feel I can handle the demands of the situation.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. I feel self-conscious.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. I get bored.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. I have to make an effort to keep my mind on what is happening.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. I would do it even if I didn't have to.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. I get distracted.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. When I am counseling, time passes slowly.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. I enjoy the experience, and/or the use of my skills.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part B

1. I feel genuinely relaxed and comfortable in my counseling/therapy sessions.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. I am able to critique counseling tapes and gain insights with minimum help from my supervisor.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. I am able to be spontaneous in counseling/therapy, yet my behavior is relevant.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. I lack self confidence in establishing counseling relationships with diverse client types.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. I am able to apply a consistent personalized rationale of human behavior in working with my clients.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. I tend to get confused when things don't go according to plan and lack confidence in my ability to handle the unexpected.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. The overall quality of my work fluctuates; on some days I do well, on other days, I do poorly.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. I depend upon my supervisor considerably in figuring out how to deal with my clients.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. I feel comfortable in confronting my clients.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Much of the time in counseling/therapy, I find myself thinking about my next response, instead of fitting my intervention into the overall picture.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. My motivation fluctuates from day to day.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. At times, I wish my supervisor could be in the counseling/therapy session to lend a hand.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. During counseling/therapy sessions, I find it difficult to concentrate because of my concern with my own performance.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. Although at times I really want advice/feedback from my supervisor, at other times I really want to do things my own way.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. Sometimes the client's situation seems so hopeless, I just don't know what to do.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. It is important that my supervisor allow me to make my own mistakes.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. Given my current state of professional development, I believe I know when I need consultation from my supervisor and when I don't.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18. Sometimes I question how suited I am to be a counselor/therapist.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. Regarding counseling/therapy, I view my supervisor as a teacher/mentor.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20. Sometimes I feel that counseling/therapy is so complex, I will never be able to learn it all.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

21. I believe I know my strengths and weaknesses as a counselor sufficiently well to understand my professional potential and limitations.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22. Regarding counseling/therapy, I view my supervisor as a peer/colleague.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

23. I think I know myself well and am able to integrate that into my therapeutic style.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

24. I find I am able to understand my clients' view of the world, yet help them objectively evaluate alternatives.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25. At my current level of professional development, my confidence in my abilities is such that my desire to do counseling/therapy doesn't change much from day to day.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

26. I find I am able to empathize with my clients' feeling states, but still help them focus on problem resolution.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

27. I am able to adequately assess my interpersonal impact on clients and use that knowledge therapeutically.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

28. I am adequately able to assess the client's interpersonal impact on me and use that therapeutically.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

29. I believe I exhibit a consistent professional objectivity, and ability to work within my role as a counselor without undue overinvolvement with my clients.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

30. I believe I exhibit a consistent professional objectivity, and ability to work within my role as a counselor without excessive distance from my clients.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part C

Read the following passages carefully.

a. "My mind isn't wandering, I am not thinking of something else; I am totally involved in what I am doing. My body feels good . . . I don't seem to hear anything, the world seems to be cut off from me . . . I am less aware of myself and my problems."

b. "My concentration is like breathing . . . I never think of it. I am really quite oblivious to my surroundings after I really get going. I think that the phone could ring, and the doorbell could ring, or the house burn down or something like that . . . When I start, I really do shut out the whole world. Once I stop I can let it back in again."

c. "I am so involved in what I am doing . . . I don't see myself as separate from what I am doing."

1. Please, indicate how often you have an experience similar to that described in any of the above three quotes while counseling.

NEVER						ALWAYS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Thank you for participating in this study.